

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L OTTAWA 05517

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, CA
SUBJECT: COMMONS OPPOSITION RAISES UPROAR OVER RCMP
INVOLVEMENT IN ILLEGAL BREAK-IN

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AND FORMER SOLICITOR GENERAL GOYER HAVE BEEN UNDER HEAVY FIRE FROM BOTH HOUSE OPPOSITION AND MEDIA FOR ALLEGED COVER-UP OF RCMP INVOLVEMENT IN ILLEGAL 1972 BREAK-IN IN MONTREAL. THEY APPEAR TO HAVE WEATHERED COMMONS ATTACK BY STRONG DENIALS EVEN IN FACE OF QUESTIONABLE CIRCUMSTANCES. REPUTATION OF RCMP, HOWEVER, WAS TARNISHED BY THIS INCIDENT, OTHER UNRELATED CHARGES OF ILLEGAL WIRETAP AND ILLEGAL BREAK-IN. GOVERNMENT HAS FIRMLY REFUSED TO AUTHORIZE JUDICIAL INQUIRY OR ROYAL COMMISSION ON 1972 EPISODE. QUEBEC PROVINCIAL AUTHORITIES HAVE ORDERED INQUIRY, HOWEVER, AND, WITH PARTI QUEBECOIS (PQ) JUSTICE MIN OPPOSED TO ANY RCMP OPERATIONS IN THAT PROVINCE, PROVINCIAL INQUIRY COULD BE HARD ON RCMP. END SUMMARY.

2. SUPPLY MIN GOYER AND LIBERAL GOVERNMENT HAVE BEEN UNDER UNRELENTING OPPOSITION ATTACK IN COMMONS DURING PAST WEEK FOR ALLEGED COVER-UP OF ILLEGAL 1972 BREAK-IN INVOLVING RCMP. MEDIA TREATMENT HAS BEEN PROMINENT AND CONFIDENTIAL

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STRONGLY CRITICAL OF GOVERNMENT AND GOYER.

3. MAJOR FACTS OF CASE ARE BRIEFLY AS FOLLOWS. MEMBERS OF MONTREAL AND QUEBEC POLICE, PLUS RCMP, BROKE INTO MONTREAL OFFICES OF LEFT-WING L'AGENCE DE PRESSE LIBRE (APLQ) ON OCT. 6-7, 1972, WITHOUT A SEARCH WARRANT. DOCUMENTS WERE TAKEN. SHORTLY AFTER BREAK-IN, APLQ SENT

TELEGRAM TO QUEBEC POLICE AUTHORITIES, AND LETTERS TO (THEN) QUEBEC JUSTICE MINISTER CHOQUETTE AND SOLICITOR GENERAL GOYER, ASKING ABOUT POSSIBLE POLICE INVOLVEMENT. CHOQUETTE PUBLICLY DENIED ANY POLICE INVOLVEMENT, AND GOYER, ACTING ON RCMP ADVICE, DID NOT REPLY.

4. EPISODE MIGHT HAVE ENDED THERE, BUT FOR FACT THAT IN MARCH 1976, LOW RANKING RCMP OFFICER ON TRIAL FOR ANOTHER UNRELATED OFFENSE REFERRED TO RCMP INVOLVEMENT IN 1972 BREAK-IN. THAT TESTIMONY LED TO SUBSEQUENT SEPARATE TRIAL OF OFFICERS FROM THREE SERVICES INVOLVED. GOVERNMENT DEFLECTED SIMULTANEOUS OPPOSITION DEMAND FOR PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE BY ARGUING SUCH DEBATE WOULD CONSTITUTE INTERFERENCE IN JUDICIAL PROCESS. THAT LID BLEW OFF ON JUNE 16, 1977, WHEN JUDGE GRANTED THREE OFFICERS "UNCONDITIONAL DISCHARGES" RAISING INFERENCE THEY HAD BEEN ACTING UNDER ORDERS FROM HIGHER AUTHORITY.

5. GOYER'S ROLE IN INCIDENT HAS BEEN FOCUS OF OPPOSITION ATTACK. HE HAS STEADFASTLY DENIED ANY KNOWLEDGE OF AFFAIR UNTIL MARCH, 1976. HE HAS CITED JUSTICE MIN CHOQUETTE'S DENIAL (AT TIME OF BREAK-IN) OF ANY POLICE INVOLVEMENT AS REASON FOR FAILURE TO ANSWER APLQ LETTER, AND EXCUSED HIS FAILURE TO ASK SENIOR RCMP OFFICIALS ABOUT MATTER BY STATING "I FOUND IT HARD TO BELIEVE THAT RCMP COULD HAVE PARTICIPATED IN AN ILLEGAL BREAK-IN."
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6. GOVERNMENT HAS FIRMLY REJECTED OPPOSITION DEMANDS FOR JUDICIAL INQUIRY OR ROYAL COMMISSION TO LOOK INTO MATTER, ASSERTING THAT INTERNAL INQUIRY BY GOVERNMENT INTO RCMP PROCEDURES IS SUFFICIENT. GOYER, FOR HIS PART, HAS CONTINUED TO DENY ANY OVERSIGHT OR MALFEASANCE IN FACE OF OPPOSITION CHARGES OF INCOMPETENCE AND DEMANDS FOR HIS RESIGNATION.

7. COMMENT: IT NOW APPEARS GOVERNMENT HAS WON BATTLE, IN COMMONS AT LEAST. LACKING ADEQUATE RESEARCH STAFF, OPPOSITION IS LIMITED IN ABILITY TO DIG FOR FURTHER EMBARRASSING DETAILS, IF SUCH EXIST. GOVERNMENT REFUSAL TO ORDER INQUIRY WILL, THEREFORE, LIKELY BE LAST WORD IN COMMONS AND GOYER IS UNLIKELY TO RESIGN, DESPITE APPEARANCE OF SOME INCOMPETENCE.

8. GOVERNMENT, AND PARTICULARLY RCMP, ARE HARDLY OUT OF THE WOODS, HOWEVER, ON QUESTION OF CONDUCT OF OPERATIONS. RCMP IS NOW OBJECT OF UNRELATED ALLEGATIONS OF ILLEGAL WIRE-TAPS AND ANOTHER ILLEGAL BREAK-IN. QUEBEC PROVINCIAL AUTHORITIES HAVE, FURTHER, ORDERED THEIR OWN

INQUIRY INTO APLQ AFFAIR. MOREOVER, PARTI QUEBECOIS (PQ)
JUSTICE MINISTER MARC-ANDRE BEDARD HAS PUBLICLY QUESTIONED
WHY RCMP OPERATES IN QUEBEC AT ALL. IF THERE ARE RCMP
SKELETONS IN CLOSET AND WITHIN REACH OF QUEBEC AUTHORITIES,
IT IS SAFE TO ASSUME THEY WILL BE BROUGHT OUT. ENDERS

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